



## **SOCIOLINGUISTIC COMPETENCE OF FOREIGN NATIONAL COLLEGE STUDENTS**

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### **Abstract**

This study was undertaken to identify the sociolinguistic competence of the foreign national college students of the selected universities in Dagupan City for the academic year 2015-2016. The selected universities are University of Pangasinan – PHINMA, University of Luzon, and Lyceum Northwestern University.

Relative to the foregoing objective, the study aimed specifically to establish the profile of the respondents in terms of their socio-structural perspective (nationality, age, sex, and native language), socio-cultural perspective (number of years studied the English language, length of stay in the Philippines, and exposure to the English language), and language learning characteristics (attitude, motivation and can-do tasks). Likewise, the sociolinguistic competence level of the respondents was identified. Furthermore, the study determined whether there exists significant relationship between the respondents' sociolinguistic competence across their profile.

The study used descriptive-correlational research method. The fifty (50) respondents were selected based on convenience sampling. The questionnaire and the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) Model Test served as the primary data-gathering instruments to identify the sociolinguistic competence of the respondents. The questionnaire is composed of three parts identifying the socio-structural perspective, socio-cultural perspective,

and language learning characteristics of the respondents. The TOEIC Model Test consists of questions 4-11 to measure the sociolinguistic competence level of the respondents.

Statistical methods used for socio-structural perspective (nationality, age, sex, and native language) and socio-cultural perspective (number of years studied the English language and length of stay in the Philippines) are frequency and percentages. For socio-cultural perspective (exposure to the English language) and language learning characteristics (attitude, motivation and can-do tasks), statistical methods used are mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis. While for the level of sociolinguistic competence across profile variables, Spearman rho correlation coefficient was used using the 0.05 level of significance.

Findings show that in terms of socio-structural perspective, most of the respondents are male Nigerians. They belong to the age group of 21-25 and majority of them speaks Arabic.

Based on socio-cultural perspective, most of the respondents have studied the English language from 0-5 years and have only stayed in the Philippines from 0-1 year. In addition, majority of the respondents stated that they are always exposed to the English language, specifically through writing letters, sending text messages, sending emails, and chatting with friends.

While in language learning characteristics, majority of the respondents have a positive attitude towards learning the English language. It is stated that most of the respondents find it interesting. They also have strong motivation towards the English language because they find it useful for further studies. In addition, they are confident that they can do tasks easily using the English language. Findings show that they are most confident in thanking someone using the English language.

Based on the summary of the TOEIC Model Test scores of the respondents, majority of them scored an above average as indicated by the mean of 14.7 whose standard deviation is 8.627. The five levels of sociolinguistic competence used in this study are highly competent, competent, moderately competent, fairly competent, and needs improvement. It was found out that majority of the respondents are competent.

Likewise, findings indicate that the overall test scores of the respondents is negatively skewed by  $-.601$  which indicates that it is above the mean. Its kurtosis of  $-.956$  indicates that it is platykurtic which means that the respondents' test scores are tightly clustered above the mean. Thus, sociolinguistic competence level of the respondents correlated significantly with their native language, attitude, motivation, and

can-do tasks.

It is therefore recommended that language teachers should create a learning environment that suits the foreign national college students focusing on the attitude, motivation, and can-do tasks. They should conduct TOEIC Model Test to students to monitor and evaluate their sociolinguistic competence for each academic year. Furthermore, other studies should be conducted that will focus on Sociolinguistics.

**Key Words:** sociolinguistic competence, socio-structural perspective, socio-cultural perspective, language learning characteristics

## **Introduction**

Linguistic competence as emphasized by Chomsky (1965 in Phillips & Tan, 2014) is the ideal language system that makes it possible for speakers to produce and understand an infinite number of sentences in their language, and to distinguish grammatical sentences from ungrammatical sentences. The concept was introduced in 1965 to address certain assumptions about language.

Mizne (1997) stated that one of the contributing factors for incompetence in the language is when the speaker does not know which utterances are appropriate in the social situation in which he or she is speaking. This ability to adjust one's speech to fit the social situation in is called sociolinguistic competence, and without this ability, even accurate grammatical utterances can convey a meaning entirely different from that which the speaker intended.

Sociolinguistic competence refers to the mastery of the cultural rules of use and rules of discourse that are at play in different languages. With respect to cultural rules of use, the emphasis is on appropriateness of communicative acts and the naturalness of speech within given socio-cultural contexts. With respect to the rules of discourse, the focus is on expressiveness using paralinguistic communication, and the rules of cohesion and coherence (Pillar, 2011).

Many non-native speakers of English received their training in that language in a formal educational setting, i.e. in classroom learning sessions preceding their migration to any Anglophone country and purportedly that such trainings will make it easier for them to interact with people in those places who speak English.

On the contrary, many of them still struggle when they experience the reality of communicating with a real Anglophone, especially in the distinct use of English in various actual social situations that seem to be so different from the English used in the academic setting to which they were made previously familiar with. Such struggle induces them to even improve or re-learn English as sensitized to its varied uses in actual communication contexts and which is imperative for their survival in those countries (Rajeswari, 2014).

The aforementioned example also inspired the type of parallel challenges in English language learning as taken up in the Philippines which is regarded as one of the leading countries that adopt English as a Second Language (ESL). According to McGeown (2012), the Philippines is fast becoming the world's low-cost English language teacher – with rapid increases in overseas students coming to learn English or study in English-speaking universities.

In addition, the Bureau of Immigration Statistics found out that there is an increase in the number of foreign students of more than 47, 000 in 2013. The increase in the number of foreign nationals enrolling in Philippine Colleges and Universities may be attributed to the proficiency of Filipino teachers in the use of English as a medium of instruction. Many of these foreign nationals in the country have been taking up Bachelor of Arts and medical courses, including dentistry (Tubeza, 2013).

Contrary to that, little is known of the status of the language learning difficulties of foreign national students in the Philippines. De Guzman, et al. (2006), a professor from the University of Santo Tomas explained that English learning difficulties of foreign national students exist both in daily conversation and in the academic setting. These difficulties are relative to their sociolinguistic competence, motivation in using the English language, and cultural factors. Thus, there is a need to explain the possible reasons, factors or causes of such learning difficulty as experienced by these foreign national students.

Premised on the above context, this study draws its research problem from the phenomenon of sociolinguistic competence in relation to other variables such as socio-structural perspective, socio-cultural perspective, and language learning characteristics. On this vantage point, this study aimed to assess the sociolinguistic competence of foreign national college students.

Identifying the predictors and the degree to what extent these predictors affect the sociolinguistic competence of the respondents point out certain issues in learning English as a

second language. These predictors raised some of the implications of such views on the current educational system in terms of teaching English as a discipline.

More importantly, this study proposed to improve the teaching practices of English teachers, to give thorough analyses of specific predictors in learning the English language, and to apply the English language in daily activities. Its implications could be used in order to integrate innovative strategies in teaching ESL to non-native speakers.

### **Scope and Delimitation of the Study**

The study was delimited on the sociolinguistic competence of the foreign national college students across their profile variables in terms of socio-structural perspective, socio-cultural perspective, and language learning characteristics. Since sociolinguistic competence is a broad term, the study restricted its context to refer only to the concerned students' ability to interpret the social meaning of the choice of linguistic varieties and their ability to use language with the appropriate social meaning for the communication situation with the rules of cohesion and coherence.

Sociolinguistic competence is also known as sociocultural competence. It involves speaking or writing at an appropriate level of formality for the situation, observing cultural norms with respect to conventions, and recognizing or using varieties or dialects of English (Coelho & Rivers, 2004). It is also a trait, as defined by Swain (as cited by Alatis, 1990), that focus on social appropriateness of language use. It could be measured through oral (role-play of speech acts), multiple choice (speech-act-level 'select the appropriate utterance' exercise), and written composition (formal request letter and informal note).

In this study, written outputs from the concerned students were employed for the data analyses as the measure to determine the status of their sociolinguistic competence. This method finds justification in a parallel research framework previously used by Coelho and Rivers (2004) and Alatis (1990). Another reason for using a written output instead of oral output is that there is relatively little research on sociolinguistic rules of speaking that has been done, as reported by Mizne (1997).

Part of the problem in studying sociolinguistic competence is the difficulty in obtaining data on actual speech act used by the respondents since observation is an intrusive and time-consuming process. Such conditions may not be feasible considering the limited time-frame established for the completion of this research. Moreover, data elicitation techniques (such as

interviews) do not always accurately represent natural speech, since it will pave for some degree of preparedness and thereby some level of artificiality as to the accounts of speech that will be produced by the respondents.

The chosen respondents are fifty (50) foreign national college students in selected universities in Dagupan City. As per distribution, five (5) respondents come from the University of Pangasinan – PHINMA, nine (9) respondents come from the University of Luzon, and thirty six (36) respondents come from the Lyceum Northwestern University.

Constraints in the choice of respondents are set by conditions such as the availability of foreign national college students enrolled in the said Universities as per academic year 2015 – 2016. The study delimited its locale only to include Universities found in Dagupan City as the greater volume of enrolment among foreign national students is concentrated in these institutions, although small traces of enrolment may be accounted for by smaller colleges in the City.

Analyses of the discourse outputs obtained from the respondents did not take into account anymore the characteristics of their linguistic competence but only those aspects of the discourse relevant to the analysis of their sociolinguistic competence. The study's instrument for data collection was likewise delimited for its specific employment of the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) Model Test which although standardized may also have some extent of limitations.

Moreover, the TOEIC Model Test was further subjected to filtering by the researcher and in which the modification from the original form of the instrument was also content-validated by a panel of experts so that these further alterations also constitute the aspects of delimitation as to concerns in data collection.

Finally, since Sociolinguistic Competence as with any competence is a phenomenon that does not lend to a definite and accurate measurement, the context of this study's assumption of looking into the "status of the respondents' sociolinguistic competence" is only relative to the one-shot performance test to which they were subjected using the aforementioned instrument. Thereby, the generalizability of the traits of their competence as divulged in this study is set within the parameters of how they manifested from the limited results of the performance test.

## **Related Literature**

## **Concepts of Sociolinguistic Competence**

The definition of sociolinguistics has given rise to much debate. According to Pierre Achard, as cited by Boutet and Maingueneau (2005), sociolinguistics is a meeting point (or a point of confusion) of three topics with different origins: the ‘sociological’ question of the place of language in human societies and the social process, the ‘linguistic’ question of language variations and the problems these pose to linguistic theory, and the ‘practical’ question of the social use of language.

Boutet and Maingueneau (2005) view sociolinguistics as characterized by certain theoretical positions on language and language activity and by a common methodological posture, going beyond differences in schools and approaches. Among common theoretical premises, focus is on heterogeneity as the founding principle. In regard to methods, there exist the construction of fields of inquiry, the observation of social situations, and the gathering of linguistic data.

In the Marxist theory of society, the theory of social interaction elaborated by Marxist sociology and the fundamental theses of Marxism on language as a social phenomenon constitute the philosophical foundation of the sociolinguistic theories. There is a precise line of demarcation between Marxist sociolinguistics and sociolinguistics oriented towards bourgeois positivist sociology (Vejcer, 1986).

Sociolinguistic competence can be defined quite simply as knowing and understanding how to speak given the circumstances you are in such as the status of participants, the purposes of interactions, and the norms or conventions of interactions (Schroeder, 2010).

Markee (2015), on the other hand, states that sociolinguistic competence is a mediated action. It is mediated by constellation of factors, including language learners’ histories, their knowledge of variable L2 forms and their meaningful potential, and the forms of support made available to them in interaction. It is an action in the sense that it emerges in concrete communicative activity – it is something learners do rather than a property of an individual learner.

Since the end of the 1980s, emerging approaches have introduced new fields of inquiry and specific theoretical interrogations, such as the sociolinguistics of work and urban sociolinguistics. Today, a broad vision of the discipline clearly prevails. Evidence for this is Françoise Gadet’s position whereby “the study of real language practices in a social context is part of sociolinguistics in the broad sense” (as cited by Boutet&Maingueneau, 2005).

## **Language Behavior and Social Communication**

The shift of focus from historical to synchronic problems causes changes in our theories of language. Modern linguists see the relationship between linguistic variants and social facts which can be examined through dialect variation and superposed variation. Dialect variation refers to differences in geographical region and social background while superposed variation refers to distinctions between different types of activities carried on within the same group (Gumperz, 2011).

There are three factors that determine the language behavior of a community. The first factor, attitudes to language choice, denotes that social norms of language choice vary from different situations and from different communities such as social acceptance, public communication, private knowledge, and language loyalty. The second factor, varietal distribution, simply means that speech differences increase as the geographical distance increases due to large gaps in communication. The third factor, verbal repertoire, a concept used to analyze the relationship between a particular language and the socioeconomic complexity of the community (Gumperz, 2011).

The existence of social norms in a particular community limits the freedom of intercommunication so as to preserve the native language. On the other hand, social change causes the breakdown of social norms which results to breakdown of language barriers between varieties. Nowadays, urbanization and globalization contribute to the gradual transition of languages.

## **Factors Influencing Sociolinguistic Competence**

According to Dell Hymes, (cited by Gumperz, 2011) in his book Language in Social Groups, states that structural abstractions of a single variety of language out of the complex varieties could represent the speech behavior of a community. This analysis explains that the culture of a specific community depends on the type of language they use. Thus, the simpler the language, the more primitive is their way of life.

Another factor of sociolinguistic competence is intra-language variation. Jakobson, (cited by Gumperz, 2011) states that a number of scholars “regard linguistic communication within a speech community, as an interconnected system of subcodes.” This statement concludes that linguistic complexity within a particular society can be understood in terms of

the relation among diverse systems of different extent. It simply indicates that linguistic complexity is determined through social complexity.

Emeneau, (cited by Gumperz, 2011) introduced then the “areal approach to linguistic relationships.” He insisted that the existence of structural borrowing proves the relationship of language and social environment.

Linguistic analysis as defined by Nadel, (cited by Gumperz, 2011), is a social communication within a linguistic community may be viewed in terms of functionally related roles. He regarded that speech behavior is one of the attributes that gives information on the nature of the role behavior expected in a community. Thus, speech behavior reflects the role of an individual in a given society. This does not only limit to the role but also to the status, gestures, etiquette of the individual.

Nadel’s approach was further developed by Firth (cited by Gumperz, 2011), introducing the concept “interactional setting”. He stated that role behavior varies in accordance to the “linguist’s context of situation or environment.”

Recent studies on the correlation between language use and the behavior introduced the totality of communication roles within the society. Fischer (cited by Gumperz, 2011) called this as the “communication matrix”. It is stated that each role has a specific code or subcode which is the basis for a role behavior. Subcodes are dialects or styles of the same language while codes are genetically distinct languages.

On the contrary, Schneider (cited by Gumperz, 2011) said that some social scientists disagree on this theory since the relationship of speech behavior and social environment is limited to specific cases.

These contexts are the different factors that try to explain the relationship between language and society.

### **English Language Issues of Foreign National Students in the Philippines**

Poor language ability, academic study problems and cultural differences are three main problems which foreign national students confronted in English speaking developing countries like in the Philippines.

Under poor language ability are different pronunciation, limited vocabulary, errors in formulating sentences, trouble of expressing oneself, and poor voice projection. Most foreign

national students feel bashful because they lack confidence of their language level and are afraid of the mock of some local students (Chen, 2014).

Academic study problems are bilingual method or code-switching, lack of guidance, and examination point of view. Bilingual method or code-switching may help slow learners to some extent but reduces the real learning process as a whole. Teachers tend to do code-switching which complicates the understanding of the foreign national students. Lack of guidance from parents and others to get acquainted with the English language is also one of the reasons (Kannan, 2009).

Another reason under academic problem is the examination system. This makes students' rote memorization rather than testing their analytical and creative skills. In this process, students memorize lessons, reproduce them in exam halls and forget them in the same day itself (Kannan, 2009).

The third reason is cultural differences, especially differences in expectations concerning how acquaintances and friends behave, and is the source of human relations among foreign national students. Language barriers cannot be fully be avoided with the existence of cross-cultural differences (Chen, 2014).

Beck (2009) focused on her study the fourth perspective of speech behavior – the dialectical relationship between speech behavior and social behavior – which according to her has been the least investigated. In her paper speech behavior and social environment: selective interactions in the American South, she argued that ethnomethodologists correctly maintain that social relations determine speech behavior. Different styles of speech behavior are adopted when speaking with a particular interactant. Her study presents that the style of speech chosen is determined by the roles and statuses of the interactants.

Espenshade and Fu (2013) supported Beck's study on speech behavior in their paper an analysis of English-Language proficiency among U.S. immigrants\*. They argued that the English-language proficiency among U.S. immigrants is determined by the cultural and other traits that U.S. immigrants acquire either at birth or while growing up in their home countries, the human capital and other endowments they possess at the time they migrate to the United States, and the skills and other experiences they accumulate after their arrival in the United States.

Duru and Poyrazli (2007), showed another determinant of sociolinguistic competence. In their study personality dimensions, psychosocial-demographic variables, and English

language competency in predicting level of acculturative stress among Turkish International students indicates marital status, English language competency, social connectedness, adjustment difficulties, neuroticism, and openness to experience are predictors of acculturative stress. This means that acculturative stress, in the same way, could also affect the sociolinguistic competence of international students.

While, Ismail (2013), in his graduate thesis on exposure, attitudes, motivation and achievement in ESL among Malay Learners: a socio-psycholinguistic study aims to investigate the standard of competence and the degree of some learner variables affecting competence among Malay learners of ESL and the strength of that correlation. Unfortunately, his study reveals that the results do not always display high correlation. Thus, the learner variables used in his study is not that significant as predictors of sociolinguistic competence.

Another study from Fox and Livingston (2007), in their study *Latinos online: Hispanics with lower levels of education and English Proficiency remain largely disconnected from the internet* showed a predictor of sociolinguistic competence. Their study shows that internet use is higher among fluent English speaking Latinos than those who have limited English abilities. This is due to that websites often use the English language. Thus, we can link sociolinguistic competence to internet literacy transcending to communication revolution.

Hammadou (2011), on the other hand, had seen other determinants of sociolinguistic competence. In her study *Interrelationships among prior knowledge, inference, and language proficiency in foreign language reading focuses on comprehending a second language*. She said that comprehension does not just understand words, sentences, or even texts, but involves building a model within the mind of the comprehender. It is stated in her study that in second language (L2) research, background knowledge has also been proven to play a significant role in comprehension. Thus, cultural familiarity affects comprehension than pre-teaching of vocabulary.

Walters (2012) presented another study. He examined M. Canale and M. Swain's 1980's discussion of the grammatical, sociolinguistic, and strategic aspects of communicative competence. In his paper *grammar, meaning, and sociocultural appropriateness in second language acquisition*, the interrelationships of the four aspects of communicative competence were investigated in 4 experiments with 123 English-speaking/Native Armenian, Hispanic, or Chicano children (6–15 yrs of age).

Cem and Alptekin (2014) introduced another determinant of sociolinguistic competence in their study on the question of culture: EFL Teaching in Non-English speaking countries. They discussed two conflicting pedagogical views in teaching EFL (English as a foreign language abroad). The first one is that English teaching should be done with reference to the socio-cultural norms and values of an English-speaking country. The second one is that English teaching should be independent of its nationality-bound cultural context. Their study suggests that cultural contexts which are familiar and relevant to students' lives should be used in teaching English as a foreign language.

Pillar (2011) addressed the issue on a different perspective. He focused on the plethora of models offered for testing writing and comprehension proficiency. His paper proposes a framework and observation instruments which can be used as a basis for testing communicative competence in a second/foreign language. His framework aims to provide a more integrated assessment of a learner's ability to communicate in spoken, interpersonal interaction. His research shows that integrative communicative approach of assessment is a very time consuming process, but the results are worthwhile in giving a more holistic, meaningful measure of the students' interpersonal communicative skills.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study ushers the theoretical assumption that the phenomenon of sociolinguistic competence is associated to the socio-cultural theory and social-psychological theory of second language acquisition. This is the reason for choosing a set of students with diverse nationalities as respondents of this study to set the conditions of exploring into a variety of socio-cultural contexts as represented by the foreign national college students.

Socio-structural perspective is characterized by attempts at dealing with the influence on bilingualism of 'objective' community characteristics. Both demographic and political aspects, together with socio-economic status are under this perspective (Gardner, 2012). In this study, these variables are age, sex, gender, and nationality. In here, Garner's Socio-psychological Theory is applied.

On the other hand, socio-cultural theory (SCT) argues that human mental functioning is fundamentally a mediated process that is organized by cultural artifacts, activities, and concepts. Language use, organization, and structure are the primary means of mediation. The

process through which cultural artifacts, such as language, take on a psychological function is known as internalization. This process, along with mediation, is one of the core concepts of SCT.

Vygotsky (as cited by Lantolf & Thorne, 2007), proposed that the key to internalization resides in the uniquely human capacity to imitate the intentional activity of other humans. In this study, this perspective comprises the number of years studied the English language, the length of stay in the Philippines, and the exposure to the English language. Hence, Vygotsky's Socio-Cultural Theory is applied in this perspective.

The third perspective is the language learning characteristics which consists of the attitude, motivation, and the Can-Do Tasks. Cognitive characteristics are individual differences in language learning that reflect differences in abilities or approaches to the task at hand (Gardner, 2012). In this study, the cognitive variable to be used is language learning strategies such as attitude, motivation, and Can-Do Tasks. These variables have shown appreciable relations to measures of achievement.

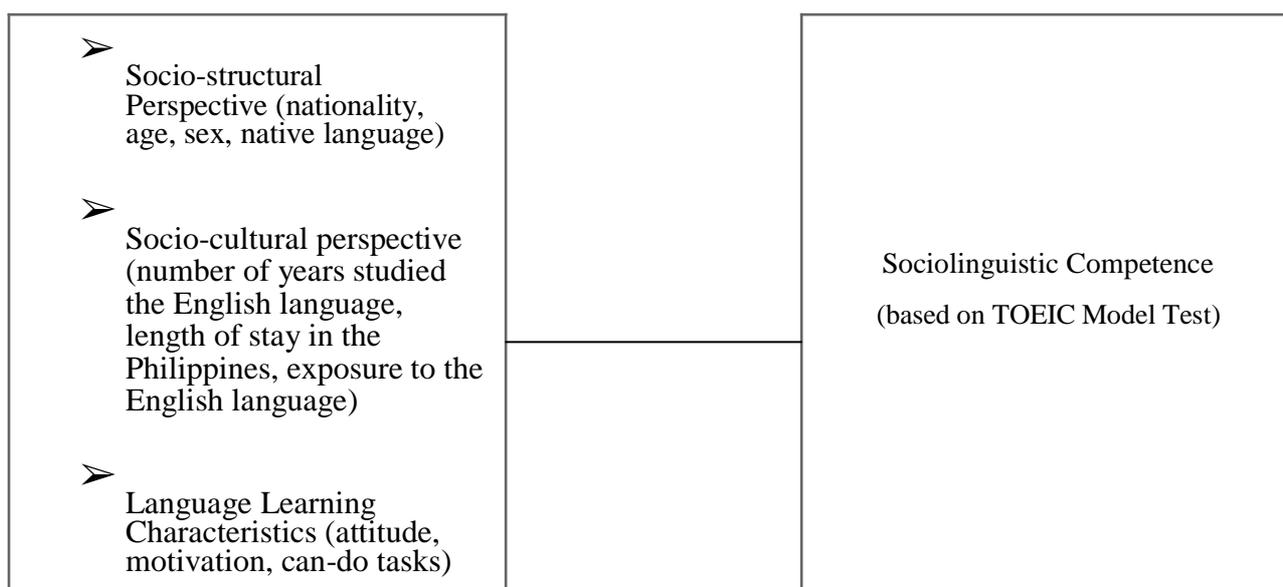
Attitude and motivation approach was originally conducted by Gardner and Lambert, who reported that achievement in the second language is loaded on two independent factors: social motivation and language aptitude (Gardner, 2012).

Can-do tasks, on the other hand was used by English Testing Service in 2009 to administer a self-assessment inventory to TOEIC examinees in Japan and Korea and found out that the everyday language tasks in English of the respondents has a significant relationship with their TOEIC speaking test scores (Educational Testing Service [ETS], 2010).

### **Conceptual Framework**

The reviewed literature and studies paved for the conceptualization of this study which aimed to determine the sociolinguistic competence of the respondents in terms of the following profile variables: socio-structural perspective (nationality, age, sex, native language), socio-cultural perspective (number of years studied the English language, length of stay in the Philippines, and exposure to the English language), and language learning characteristics (attitude, motivation, and can-do tasks).

The conceptual paradigm (Figure 1) shows a correlation between the profile variables of the respondents and their sociolinguistic competence-variable.



**Fig. 1** Paradigm Showing the Relationship between Profile Variables of the Respondents and their Sociolinguistic Competence-Variable

### ***Research Methodology***

#### **Research Design**

This study employed a descriptive and a correlational research. Descriptive research is a study designed to depict the participants in an accurate way. More simply put, descriptive research is all about describing people who take part in the study. Thus, this study is a descriptive research for its attempts to make a survey on several levels of the profile of the respondents as well as a survey and description of the status of their sociolinguistic competence. .

Moreover, this study also hinges on the correlational method which characterizes the status of relationship between variables. The use of correlation in this study is justified in the interest of one of the questions presupposed in the research problem that requires associating two sets of variables, to wit: the profile-variables of the respondents and their sociolinguistic competence-variable in an attempt to determine the degree at which a significant relationship can be established and which shall be the basis for further interpretation.

As the final phase of this study's analysis, it is ultimately interested to find out if any of the profile variables is significantly related to the respondents' sociolinguistic competence. The findings therefrom can be used as a baseline data in the formulation of a potential instructional intervention or the upgrading of instructional designs or in the development of an instructional material and which may take upon the merits of the findings of this study as guidelines in further improving the agency of these various educational mechanisms in the advancement of students' multi-faceted competence in the English language, which includes sociolinguistic competence for that matter. This study, however, makes no further attempt to recommend a concrete output that may amount to such instructional programs or projects as these may be taken up as a separate future research which may draw from the merits of the findings of this study.

### **Respondents of the Study**

The chosen respondents are the foreign national college students in the three selected universities in Dagupan City. To pave for comprehensiveness in terms of gathering to a fairly large extent a sample of the accounts of sociolinguistic competence from students with varied nationalities, it was previously agreed upon by the researcher in communion with the research panel to establish the population of the respondents at 50. This will also allow for the credible use of the correlational statistical tool which requires a fairly large sample size for the reliability of its results.

The total of 50 respondents was drawn from the foreign national college students enrolled in the three large Universities of Dagupan City. The unequal distribution of the students vis-à-vis their affiliation to the three Universities was due to the availability of willing respondents as well as certain conditions set by these Universities.

Thenceforth, five (5) respondents (10%) were taken from the University of Pangasinan – PHINMA; nine (9) respondents from the University of Luzon (18%); and thirty six (36) from

the Lyceum Northwestern University (72%), for a total of fifty (50) respondents (100%). Ethical considerations were subtly taken so that the selection of the respondents was not just obtained as a matter of permission from the management of their institutional affiliations but likewise from their voluntary willingness to cooperate with this study.

### **Data Gathering Instruments**

The data-gathering instruments of this study presupposed the use of a questionnaire and a test, which are either researcher-developed or modified. The instruments are stipulated and described in the foregoing discussion. .

The **questionnaire** was adopted from the theses of Lopez (2004) and Mizne (1997) with several modifications from its original form introduced by the researcher and duly consulted with the research panel as a matter of validation. It consists of two parts. The first part inquires into the socio-structural perspective of the respondents, namely: nationality, age, sex, and native language. The second part inquires into the socio-cultural perspective of the respondents, namely: number of years studied the English language, length of stay in the Philippines, and exposure to the English language. The last part of the questionnaire inquires into the language learning characteristics, namely: attitude, motivation, and can-do tasks.

The outline of the instrument containing the modifications was presented to the adviser and critic reader for analysis and proof reading. The gathered comments, suggestions and recommendations were integrated into its final draft. The entire questionnaire was subjected to content validity assessment requesting five experts in the field to evaluate the instrument. The five experts have been in the teaching profession for more than ten years from the time of the validation, with post graduate degree and have experienced handling foreign national college students in different English courses.

The result of the content validity assessment as well as the instrument used for this assessment is reflected in Appendix E and Appendix F. Accordingly, the questionnaire is evaluated to be “Very Highly Valid” for obtaining the required data for this study.

Data gathered from the aforementioned questionnaire are in aid of answering the first question of the research problem. A copy of this instrument can be seen in Appendix A.

To be able to test the sociolinguistic competence of the respondents, the **TOEIC Model Test** was used. This test includes tasks that people might perform in work-related situations or in familiar daily activities that are common across cultures. It includes six different task types.

The first four types (Questions 1-9) are rated on a scale of 0 to 3 and the last two types (Questions 10-11) are rated on a scale of 0 to 5.

For this study, only questions 4-11 were used in relation to sociolinguistic competence. Even though it is a standardized test, not all the questions were used for the purpose of this study. Thus, the TOEIC Model Test was also subjected to validation by the five English Faculty members and was filtered to suit a test required only to assess the sociolinguistic competence of the respondents. For reference purposes, a copy of the original reference TOEIC Test and its modified form appears in Appendix B. The result as well as the instrument used for the validation of the modified form of the TOEIC Model Test is also indicated in Appendix E and Appendix F. Accordingly, the modified form of the test was evaluated to be “Very Highly Valid”.

Rubrics for TOEIC Model Test is shown on Table 1 while Scoring Guide for Questions 4-11 are shown on Tables 2, 3, and 4.

**Table 1**

**Rubrics for TOEIC Model Test**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>Evaluation Criteria</b>
4-6	Respond to questions	Appropriateness of the utterances with respect to conventions, cohesion, relevance of content, completeness of content
7-9	Respond to questions using information provided	Appropriateness of the utterances with respect to conventions, cohesion, relevance of content, completeness of content
10	Propose a solution	Appropriateness of the utterances with respect to conventions, cohesion, relevance of content, completeness of content

<p>Appropriateness of the utterances with respect to Express an opinion conventions, cohesion, relevance of content, completeness of content</p>
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Table 1 indicates the tasks and evaluation criteria to be used in measuring the sociolinguistic competence of the respondents. The criteria for evaluation for all the tasks are cohesion, relevance of content, and completeness of content.

**Table 2**  
**Scoring Guide for Questions 4-9**

Score	Response Description
3	The response is full, relevant, socially appropriate reply to the question. In the case of Questions 7-9, information from the prompt is accurate.
2	The response is a partially effective reply to the question, but is not complete, fully appropriate, or in the case of Questions 7-9, fully accurate.
1	The response does not answer the question effectively. Relevant information is not conveyed successfully.
0	No response OR no English in the response OR the response is completely unrelated to the test.

**Table 3**

### Scoring Guide for Question 10

Score	Response Description
5	The response successfully completes all parts of the task and is readily intelligible, coherent, and sustained.
4	The response addresses all parts of the task appropriately, but may fall short of being fully developed. It is generally intelligible, sustained, and coherent, with some minor lapses.
3	The response attempts to address the task, but does not successfully complete all parts of the task. It contains mostly intelligible speech, although problems with delivery and/or overall coherence may occur.
2	The response includes very little relevant content and/or speech is mostly unintelligible or incoherent.
1	The response may be completely unintelligible OR the response may consist of isolated words or phrases, or mixtures of the first language and English OR the response may be vague and general, and show no interaction with the prompt.
0	No response OR no English in the response OR the response is completely unrelated to the test.

Table 2 illustrates the description of scoring guide for questions 4-9 with the score of 3 being the highest and 0 being the lowest. On the other hand, Table 3 explains the description of scoring guide for question 10 with the score of 5 being the highest and 0 being the lowest. The same is true for Table 4 which shows the description of scoring guide for question 11.

### Table 4

### Scoring Guide for Question 11

<b>Score</b>	<b>Response Description</b>
5	The response clearly indicates the speaker's choice or opinion, and support of the choice or opinion is readily intelligible, sustained, and coherent.
4	The response clearly indicates the speaker's choice or opinion and adequately supports or develops the choice or opinion.
3	The response expresses a choice, preference, or opinion, but development and support of the choice or opinion is limited.
2	The response states a choice, preference, or opinion relevant to the prompt, but support for the choice, preference, or opinion is missing, unintelligible, or incoherent.
1	The response fails to state an intelligible choice, preference, or opinion as required by the prompt OR the response consists of isolated words or phrases, or mixtures of the first language and English.
0	No response OR no English in the response OR the response is completely unrelated to the test.

### **Data Gathering Procedure**

Permission to conduct the study was sought from the management of the selected universities, namely: University of Pangasinan – PHINMA, University of Luzon, and Lyceum Northwestern University. A copy of these formal communications as approved by the concerned management authorities are placed in Appendices G, H, and I.

Consultation with the concerned students as well as the convenient scheduling of the period in which they can accommodate responding to the research instruments were facilitated through the agency of the respective focal persons in the concerned Universities who takes charge of the foreign national college students. Collection of the results from this procedure was obtained immediately after which the data were encoded and tallied in spreadsheets and subjected to the appropriate statistical analyses. The latter procedure was also made under the

supervision of an accredited Statistician to ensure accuracy in the use of the statistical tools and the statistical interpretation of its results.

## ***Results and Discussion***

### **Profile of Foreign National College Students**

The profile of the foreign national college students is described in terms of socio-structural perspective (nationality, age, sex, and native language), socio-cultural perspective (number of years studied the English language, length of stay in the Philippines, exposure towards the English language), and language learning characteristics (attitude, motivation, and can-do tasks).

**On Nationality.** The table shows a variety of 11 nationalities represented from the totality of the respondents. The nationalities include Indian, Nepalese, Nigerian, Somalian, Sudanese, Ghanaian, Syrian, Yemeni, Chadian, Samoan, and Iraqi. It is also apparent that majority of the respondents are Nigerians comprising 24.0 percent as compared to Somalians, which is the least, consisting only 8.0 percent of the total number of respondents.

The deliberate choice for students with varied nationalities to serve as the respondents of this study is theoretically supported having been based on the conceptual framework of the studies of Hammadou (2011). Hammadou (2011) wherein it was contended that prior knowledge like cultural familiarity affects comprehending a second language. Thereby, the close link between culture and prior knowledge (schema) justifies the theoretical assumption too that the variety in nationality (and cultural affiliation) will represent variations in terms of schema.

As with the finding on the large fraction of the population having Nigerian nationality, this is not merely incidental. Nigerians started to migrate in the Philippines and attended schools in the Philippines as early as the 1960s (Igbokwe, 2011), and that friendly ties have been maintained between the two countries especially that educational opportunities in the Philippines are known to be inexpensive compared to those offered in other countries.

As of 2014, about 8,000 Nigerians are studying in the Philippines (Aderemi, 2014), and that has likewise been their exposure and challenge to learn the English language, since the Philippines is a country that takes English as a Second Language and a lingua franca in enterprises related to the government, industries and the academe.

**On Age.** Majority of the respondents belong to the age bracket 21-25 which makes up 52.0 percent of the total. The inclusion of age as a profile variable was taken up from the injunctions of Schroeder (2010), wherein he regarded sociolinguistic competence as knowing and understanding how to speak given the circumstances you are in such as the status of participants, the purposes of interactions, and the norms or conventions of interactions. Thereby, given the age-bracket of most of the respondents, it sets the congenial condition in which they are already immersed in several social situations that require them to partake in negotiations and other forms of social transactions so that it is viable to test them in their sociolinguistic skills which they have been employing into the said situations.

**On Sex.** There are more males than females comprising 82.0 percent and 18.0 percent respectively. The pattern is likewise true even taking the sex-distribution of the respondents as they are clustered into the three Universities. The inclusion of sex as a profile variable was inspired from Nadel's (cited by Gumperz, 2011) contention that speech behavior is one of the attributes that gives information on the nature of the role behavior expected in a community. Thus, speech behavior reflects the role of an individual in a given society. This does not only limit to the role but also to the status, gestures, etiquette of the individual.

This study draws such context by associating them to sex roles. Accordingly, even as the respondent population accounts for the predominance of male, the number of female students still paved for sufficient exploration into their peculiar sociolinguistic traits and which are comparatively analyzed with those of their male counterpart.

**On Native Language.** There are 34.0 percent of the respondents who speak Arabic while 6.0 percent speak Somali. Majority of the respondents are from Arab speaking countries.

The employment of native language as one of the profile variables takes from the scholarly assertion of Gumperz (2011) that one of the factors that determine the language behavior of a community is varietal distribution in which it is claimed that speech differences increase as the geographical distance increases due to large gaps in communication. The existence of social norms in a particular community limits the freedom of intercommunication so as to preserve the native language. On the other hand, social change causes the breakdown of social norms which results to breakdown of language barriers between varieties.

Since Arabic is from the Semitic language family, its grammar is very different from English. There is a large potential for errors of interference when Arab learners produce written or spoken English (Shoebottom, 2016).

In another study by Unciano (2006), ESL learners were accounted to have frequent tendencies to project the linguistic rules of their first language to the target language, which is an interlanguage strategy. This study draws from such contention to further explore if sociolinguistic rules and conditions are also featured as an aspect in the phenomenon of language transfer in the accounts of Arabic speakers pursuing English as a target language.

### **Socio-cultural Perspective**

Table 7 indicates the profile of the respondents with regards to the number of years studied the English language, length of stay in the Philippines, and exposure to the English language

**Table 7**  
**Socio-cultural Perspective of the Respondents**

<b>Profile Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Number of Years Studied the English Language</b>		
0 – 5 years	18	36.0
6 – 10 years	11	22.0
11 – 15 years	10	20.0
16 – 20 years	4	8.0
More than 20 years	7	14.0
<b>Length of Stay in the Philippines</b>		
0 – 1 year	30	60.0
2 – 3 years	13	26.0
4 – 5 years	7	14.0

**Number of Years Studied the English Language.** Table 7 shows that 36.0 percent of the respondents underwent formal trainings in the English language from 0-5 years while 4.0 percent have studied the language from 16-20 years. Mizne (1997) also used the same profile-

variable in her study Teaching Sociolinguistic Competence in the ESL Classroom wherein she used it to elicit reports on her respondents' language background.

A parallel profile-variable is used by Unciano (2006) in his study but with a broader category, i.e. "extent of exposure to linguistic inputs in the English language". In like manner that Unciano justified the use of this variable is also informed by theory that length of exposure to linguistic inputs whether in a formal or an informal setting affects even the development of motivation to learn the target language. Unciano further characterizes in his study the degree of accuracy of such linguistics inputs to which students are exposed. In this study, considering that the pre-collegiate years of education of the respondents are presumably in their own countries of origin, then there is an opportunity in exploring at the extent and quality of linguistic inputs in the English language that the respondents have been subjected to across the years that they claimed to have been underwent education in that language.

**Length of Stay in the Philippines.** Majority of the respondents comprising 60.0 percent have stayed in the Philippines from 0-1 year while only 14.0 percent have already stayed 4-5 years. This is another profile variable used by Mizne (1997). In her study, the concern is the length of stay of the respondents in the US. Just like the profile variable that concerns the number of years studied the English language, it was also used as a language background. Considering the minimal number of years of the respondents' stay in the Philippines, it allows the research to even more effectively observe their strategic grasp of sociolinguistic competence as they are still at the initial stages of acculturation in the social norms of the Philippines and so it was of great interest to note on their struggle in the use of English as they go about with their social negotiations and transactions.

**Table 7.1**

**Socio-cultural Perspective of the Respondents:**

**Exposure to the English Language**

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Description</b>
1. I read news articles in English.	3.88	Often
2. I read different literary genres in English.	3.78	Often

3. I write letters in English.	4.44	Often
4. I refer to dictionaries and grammar books when I need to.	3.98	Often
5. I send text messages, send emails and chat with my friends in English.	4.44	Often
6. I use the English language when talking to my friends.	4.00	Often
7. I use the English language at home.	3.28	Sometimes
8. I listen to broadcast in English.	4.00	Often
9. I watch English movies than other films dubbed in other languages.	4.10	Often
<b>Overall Weighted Mean</b>	<b>3.99</b>	<b>Often</b>

**Exposure to the English Language.** Table 7.1 shows an overall weighted mean of 3.99 using a five-point Likert scale which indicates the general perception among the respondents that they are “often” exposed to the English language. Further analysis of the data also reveal that among the premises indicating such level of exposure, indicators 3 and 5 have the highest mean (4.44) out of the ten indicators. Thereby, it appears that such level of exposure is characterized by the notable frequency in their encounter with writing letters, sending text messages, sending emails, and chatting with friends, in which these engagements involved the use of the English language.

Ismail (2013) and Fox and Livingston (2007) mentioned that exposure to the English language does not always display high correlation with levels of proficiency, although Fox and Livingston (2007) affirmed that exposure to the English language specifically internet use can be correlated to sociolinguistic competence.

## Language Learning Characteristics

Table 8 shows the profile of the respondents with regards to the attitude, motivation, and can-do tasks.

**On Attitude.** Table 8 indicates that an overall weighted mean of 4.06 using a five-point Likert scale which indicates the respondents' general perception of themselves as having a positive attitude towards the English language. Further analysis of data also reveals that attitude-indicator 10 is generally given the highest rating (mean: 4.54) among all indicators. Accordingly, the respondents generally find the English language interesting. Relative to this finding, attitude is viewed as one of the predictors of sociolinguistic competence by such scholars as Gumperz (2011), Gardner (2012), and Ismail (2013). Moreover, the finding provide a cue at the general optimism among the foreign students in their views of learning the English language but in which this would have also been anticipated from their personal decisions to enroll in Philippine Universities considering that they were also previously aware of the prevalent use of English in the Philippines, not just in the academic setting but in other social settings as well. It can also be noted that despite the significant gap in the rules of English and Arabic which is the first language of most of the respondents, this premise does not appear to be factor of obstruction for their appreciation of the English language.

**Table 8**

### **Language Learning Characteristics of the Respondents:**

#### **Attitude towards the English Language**

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Description</b>
1. I like to read English books.	4.28	Agree
2. I like to listen to stories related in English.	4.26	Agree
3. I like to spend more hours in learning the English language.	3.82	Agree
4. I like to play word games.	3.86	Agree
5. I like reading aloud.	3.54	Agree
6. I choose English books that I read.	4.10	Agree

7. I like reading to myself.	3.88	Agree
8. I do my English homework immediately.	4.08	Agree
9. I am always prepared in my English class.	4.20	Agree
10. I find English language interesting.	4.54	Strongly Agree
<b>Overall Weighted Mean</b>	<b>4.06</b>	<b>Agree</b>

**On Motivation.** Table 8.1 points out an overall weighted mean of 4.49 using a five-point Likert scale which indicates that the respondents generally account for strong motivation towards the English language. Further data analysis also shows that motivation-indicator 9 generally obtained the highest rating (mean: 4.70) compared to how the other indicators are rated. This analysis points to the fact the respondents generally find the English language useful for further studies.

Accordingly, motivation was also seen as one of the predictors of sociolinguistic competence by Gardner (2012), Ismail (2013), and De Guzman, et al. (2006). However, analyzing closely the prevalent cause of motivation of the respondents based on the said indicators, it may indicate a greater leaning on that type of motivation known as “instrumental motivation”.

Gardner (in Unciano, 2006) proposed a typology of language-learning motivation by distinguishing instrumental from integrative motivation but in which he regarded the latter as the more stable type of motivation associated with the motivation manifested by learners who achieve higher levels of English proficiency.

The findings of Unciano (2006) in his study also corroborates with Gardner’s contention as those subjects with relatively higher measures of proficiency also coincide to having higher levels of integrative motivation compared to their accounts of instrumental motivation.

**Table 8.1****Language Learning Characteristics of the Respondents:****Motivation towards the English Language**

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Description</b>
1. English is required in my chosen program.	4.53	Strongly Agree
2. It helps in knowing the ways of life of the native speakers.	4.22	Agree
3. It enables me to appreciate and enjoy materials written in English.	4.34	Agree
4. It is useful in securing a job.	4.44	Agree
5. It gives me confidence in communicating with English native speakers.	4.44	Agree
6. It is useful in transacting business activities.	4.54	Strongly Agree
7. It adds prestige or recognition in the community.	4.46	Agree
8. It contributes to my personal development.	4.68	Strongly Agree
9. It is useful for further studies.	4.70	Strongly Agree
10. It makes me knowledgeable.	4.58	Strongly Agree
<b>Overall Weighted Mean</b>	<b>4.49</b>	<b>Agree</b>

**Can-Do Tasks.** Table 8.2 states an overall weighted mean of 4.35 using a five-point Likert scale which indicates that the respondents are generally confident in performing tasks using the English language. Moreover, among the indicators set for this phenomenon, it was indicator 9 that generally obtained the highest ratings (mean: 4.50), pointing out that the respondents are generally confident in using the English language when it comes to verbally

communicating gratitude to someone or thanking someone for that matter. The profile variable was also employed by Mizne (1997) and ((Educational Testing Service [ETS], 2010) with their respective findings. Conversely, the indicator that generally obtained their lowest rating is indicator 2 (mean: 4.12) and is concerned with verbal communications involving “refusal to an offer”.

A phenomenological analysis patterned from the method used by Unciano (1997) can bring forth a noteworthy observation when comparing the respondents’ highest-rated indicator with the lowest-rated indicator that reveals a hermeneutic contrast between them. It is likely that an interception of cultural elements is at play here wherein courtesy gestures of “thanking” is more culturally favorable even considering the variety across the national cultures of the respondents and that gestures of “refusal” are culturally inconvenient. It is not far that this may also be associated with the confidence of verbally communicating “thankfulness” in a sociolinguistically appropriate execution than doing so for a culturally uninviting gesture of “refusal”.

**Table 8.2**  
**Language Learning Characteristics of the Respondents:**  
**Can-Do Tasks using the English Language**

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Description</b>
1. I can do invitations.	4.34	Agree
2. I can say refusals or say no to an offer.	4.12	Agree
3. I can apologize or say sorry for something.	4.48	Agree
4. I can request or ask for things.	4.42	Agree
5. I can command or tell someone to do something.	4.20	Agree
6. I can give compliments.	4.40	Agree
7. I can give suggestions.	4.36	Agree
8. I can give advice.	4.46	Agree

9. I can thank someone.	4.50	Strongly Agree
10. I can file complaints.	4.20	Agree
<b>Overall Weighted Mean</b>	<b>4.35</b>	<b>Agree</b>

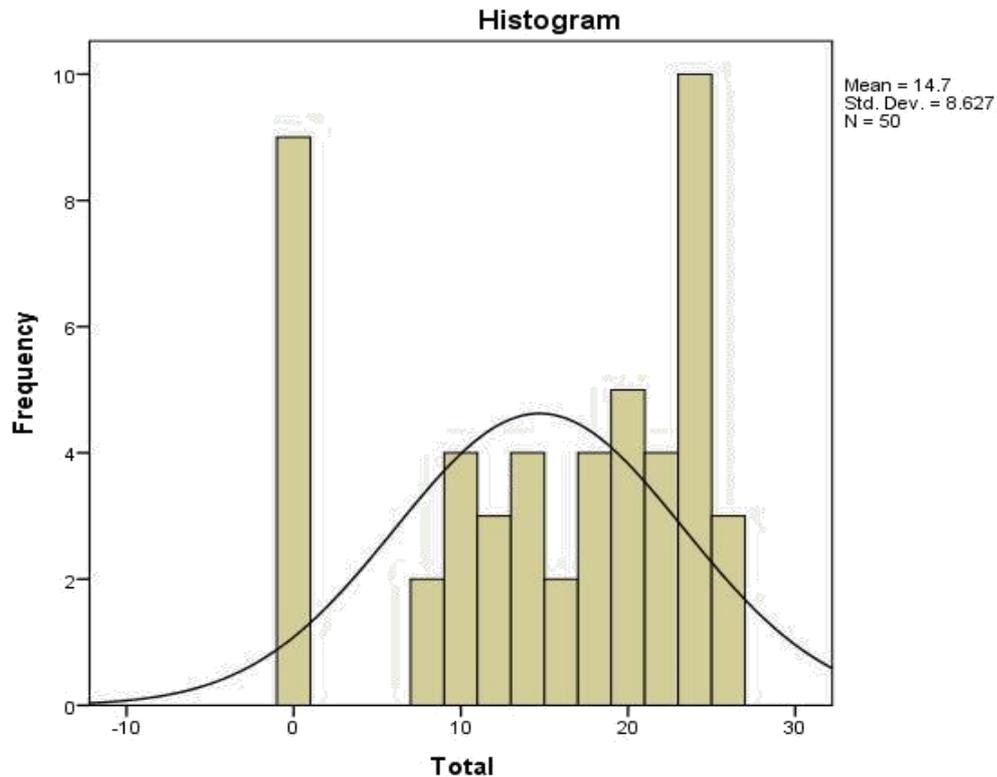
### **Sociolinguistic Competence of Foreign National College Students**

Table 9 presents the statistically processed results of the students' performance in the TOEIC Model Test. As reflected therein, majority of the respondents obtained above average scores (mean: 14.7) and where the standard deviation is set at 8.627. As such, the mean of their scores falls within the range described as "Above Average". Since the conceptual framework of this study intends to use the results of the performance test to obtain a passing glimpse at the respondents' status of sociolinguistic competence however not limiting its evidence only to the results of such test, then it may be inferred that the status of their competence generally lies somewhere above standard expectations and which can be regarded as meritorious for that matter.

**Table 9**  
**Summary of the TOEIC Model Test Scores of the Respondents**

	<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Skewness</b>	<b>Kurtosis</b>
<b>Total</b>	50	0	25	-.601	-.956
<b>Description</b>	Above Average				

Figure 2 shows the histogram of the summary of the distribution of TOEIC Model test scores of the respondents. It shows that the overall test scores of the respondents is negatively skewed and platykurtic. The distribution is negatively skewed by -.601 which indicates that it is above the mean. Its kurtosis of -.956 indicates that it is platykurtic which means that the respondents' test scores are tightly clustered above the mean.



**Fig. 2** Histogram of TOEIC Model Test Scores of the Respondents

Table 10 indicates the distribution of the respondents into the five levels that measure the extent of a learner’s sociolinguistic competence as established in this study. The criteria used to establish the leveling is theory-informed. It was found that 44.0 percent of the respondents have “Average” status of sociolinguistic competence in contrast to 12.0 percent that have “fair” status. These represent the extreme poles in the range of status obtained by the students that characterize their sociolinguistic competence.

**Table 10**

**Summary of the Level of Sociolinguistic Competence of the Respondents**

<b>Level of Sociolinguistic Competence</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Low	9	18.0
Fair	6	12.0
Moderate	13	26.0
Average	22	44.0
High	0	0.0

Table 11 provides the more detailed results of the students' performance in the TOEIC Model Test reflecting each of their ratings obtained. Highest score obtained was 25 out of the 28 questions. Out of the fifty (50) respondents, twenty one (21) appear to approximate the standard level of competence required.

This finding was not primordially anticipated considering the input from the survey that majority of them have a residency period in the Philippines for barely a year wherein it would have implied a fairly normal expectation that they are still in the initial stages of social adjustment which involves the conditions that set their sociolinguistic competence as well. Unless that this can be explained for the fact that prior to their arrival in the Philippines is that they have likewise stayed in other countries that uses English as a lingua franca so that their acculturation to such sociolinguistic requirements have long started even prior to the start of their residency in the Philippines.

Another possible explanation is that the cultures in their respective countries are fairly analogous to Philippine culture so that the tense requirements for acculturation is reduced as there is less adjustments to be made. However since these conditions have not been anticipated at the stage of the conceptualization of the research problem, then no variables have been set to inquire into these information but which may be further explored if parallel research inspired from this study will be subsequently conducted.

**Table 11**  
**Sociolinguistic Competence of the Respondents**

<b>Respondent#</b>	<b>TOEIC Model Test Score</b>	<b>Level of Sociolinguistic Competence</b>	<b>Respondent#</b>	<b>TOEIC Model Test Score</b>	<b>Level of Sociolinguistic Competence</b>
1	24	Competent	26	0	Needs improvement
2	24	Competent	27	0	Needs improvement
3	19	Competent	28	0	Needs improvement
4	20	Competent	29	0	Needs improvement
5	20	Competent	30	0	Needs improvement
6	19	Competent	31	18	Moderately competent
7	16	Moderately competent	32	9	Fairly competent
8	18	Moderately competent	33	17	Moderately competent
9	13	Moderately competent	34	12	Moderately competent
10	0	Needs improvement	35	16	Moderately competent
11	19	Competent	36	23	Competent
12	9	Fairly competent	37	23	Competent
13	22	Competent	38	25	Competent
14	14	Moderately competent	39	24	Competent
15	11	Moderately competent	40	24	Competent

16	9	Fairly competent	41	24	Competent
17	9	Fairly competent	42	21	Competent
18	7	Fairly competent	43	23	Competent
19	14	Moderately competent	44	25	Competent
20	0	Needs improvement	45	22	Competent
21	0	Needs improvement	46	25	Competent
22	11	Moderately competent	47	23	Competent
23	14	competent	48	23	Competent
24	21	Competent	49	17	Competent
25	0	Needs improvement	50	8	Fairly competent

### **Relationship between Sociolinguistic Competence and Learner-Related Variables**

Table 12 indicates the results from the statistical correlation between two sets of variable, i.e. the sociolinguistic competence of the respondents and their profile variables. Statistically, those variables found to be significantly related to sociolinguistic competence are native language (0.017), attitude (0.014), motivation, and can-do tasks (0.020). The quantitative values are assessed relative to the threshold set previously under the Methodology that significance in relationship shall be tested at 0.05 level of significance so that any value below this threshold were statistically declared as indicative of significance in relationship.

**Table 12**  
**Sociolinguistic Competence across Profile Variables**

<b>Profile Category</b>	<b>Profile Variables</b>	<b>Statistical Treatment</b>	<b>Correlation Coefficient</b>	<b>Significance</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
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		Spearman's rho			
	Nationality		-.135	.348	Not Significant
Socio-structural Perspective	Age		.047	.748	Not Significant
	Sex		.048	.742	Not Significant
	Native Language		.336*	.017	Significant
Socio-cultural Perspective	Years studied English		.236	.099	Not Significant
	Length of Stay in the Philippines		.076	.600	Not Significant
	Exposure to the English Language		.229	.110	Not Significant
Language Learning Characteristics	Attitude		.345*	.014	Significant
	Motivation		.288*	.042	Significant
			.328*	.020	Significant

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\* Highlights provided

The foregoing narrative deals on an intensive explanation and discussion of the profile variables that were found to be significantly related to sociolinguistic competence. Since the statistical analysis used is correlational, even as significant relationships were established between these sets variables, care was taken as not to necessarily infer a case of causality between the two phenomena or that one is a factor to the other. The proven significant correlation merely establishes the close association between the variables but not necessarily implying causation.

### **Native language and Sociolinguistic Competence**

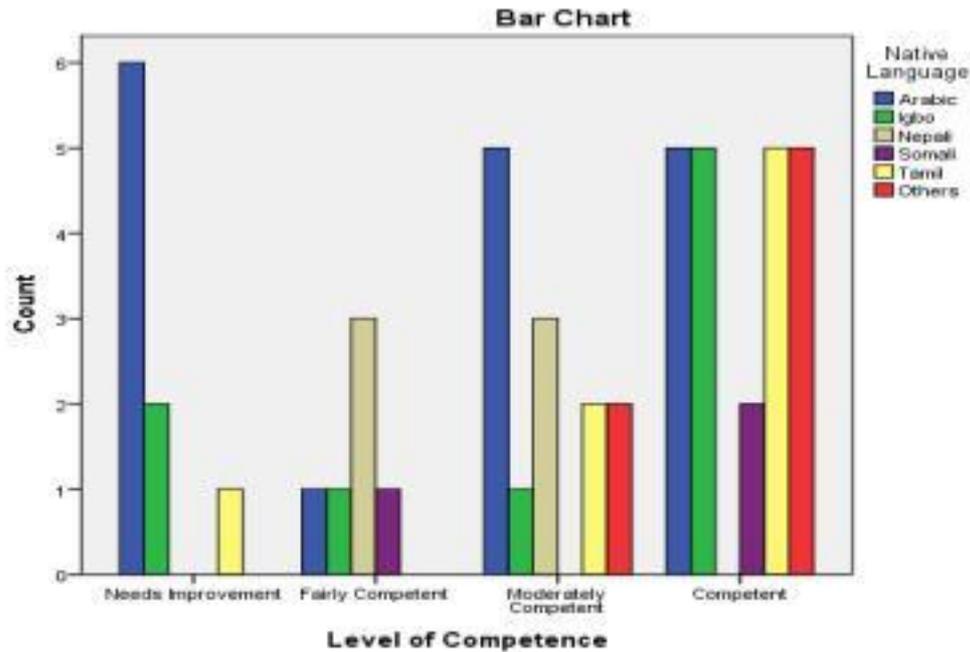
Native language was one of the variables found to have a significant relationship with sociolinguistic competence and where this profile variable also registers under socio-structural perspective. This fact alone implies that sociolinguistic competence has a socio-structural perspective and is a fact that has likewise been asserted in some of the pertinent works in literature cited in Chapter 3. The findings of this study reinforce the continuity of such scholarly contentions.

Figure 3 isolates the statistical data relative to the correlational procedure conducted to prove the significant relationship between native tongue and sociolinguistic competence.

It is noteworthy that majority of the respondents who fall within the range of “Competent” (status of sociolinguistic competence) speak Arabic, Igbo, and Tamil. It appears then that the linguistic structures of these particular languages and probably even their reference culture can have positive associations with the development of sociolinguistic competence. Much that inference cannot be pushed to the extent of saying that having these languages as a mother tongue can reinforce sociolinguistic competence in English; nevertheless, it can be inferred that having these languages as a mother tongue do not provide significant obstruction to the development of sociolinguistic competence in English.

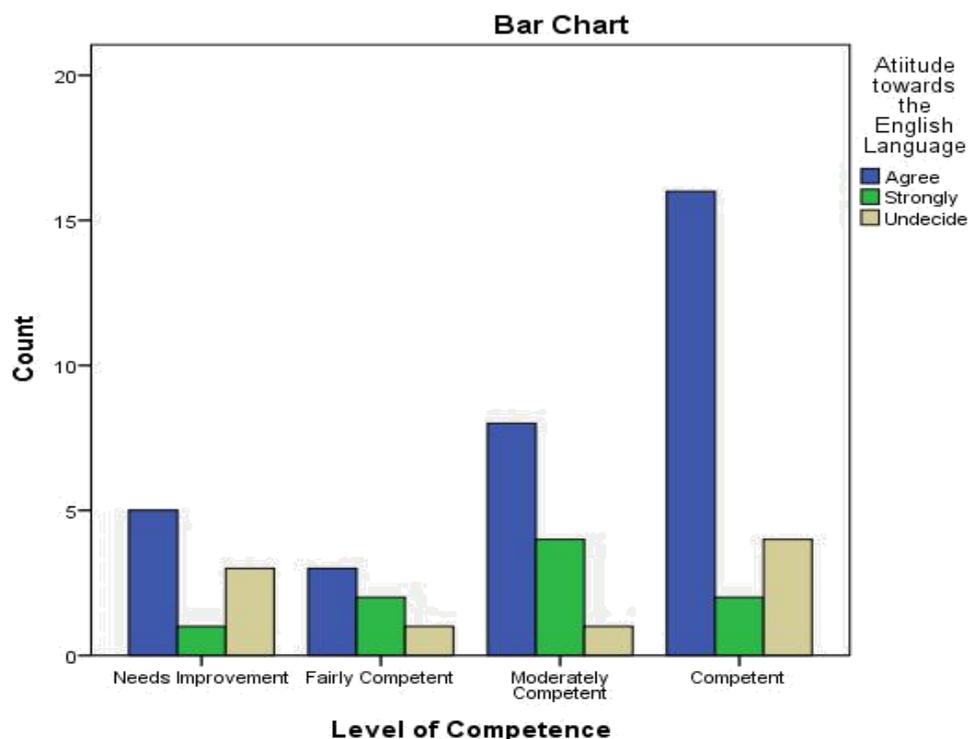
Assuming that the concerned respondents are typical representatives of persons belonging to their culture and that no extraneous variables differentiating them from the rest

are present, then it may be further generalized that those who speak these languages will not be far from having the same experience in their attempt to approximate sociolinguistic competence in English. In this context, it will be meritorious to note Emeneau's, (cited by Gumperz, 2011) assertion that the existence of structural borrowing proves the relationship of language and social environment.



**Fig. 3** Sociolinguistic Competence on the Native Language of the Respondents

In further relation, Gardner (2012) in his Socio-psychological Theory also used socio-structural perspective to explore on the influence on bilingualism of 'objective' community characteristics. Both demographic and political aspects, together with socio-economic status are under this perspective. In this study, the variable native language is deemed significant.



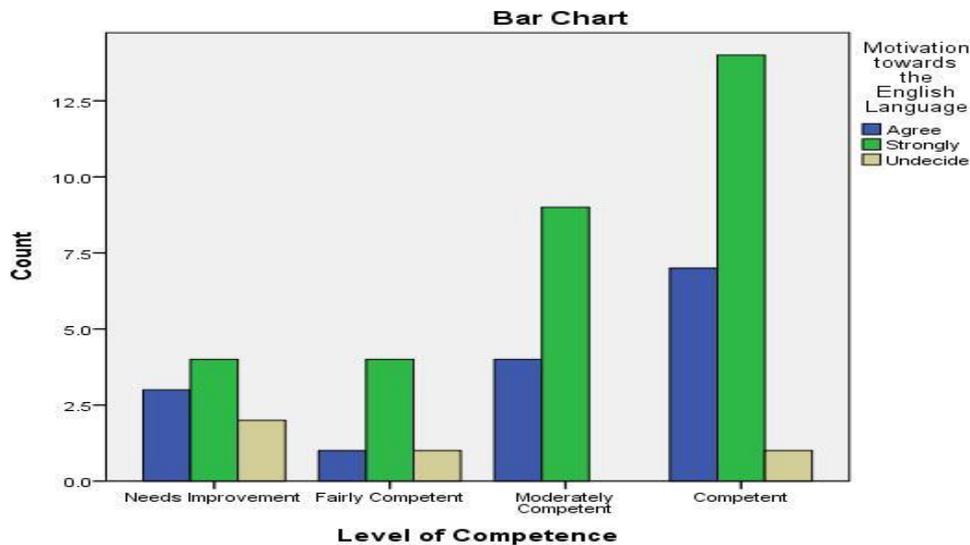
**Fig. 4** Sociolinguistic Competence on the Attitude towards the English Language

### Attitude and Sociolinguistic Competence

Figure 4 likewise isolates the data as to the results of the correlational statistics. With the previous confirmation of the significance in the relationship between these variables, it also implies that sociolinguistic competence is associated with learner characteristics since attitude is billeted under this profile-variable category used to determine the status of relationship between attitude and sociolinguistic competence.

Noteworthy is the finding that majority of the respondents that are competent have a positive attitude towards learning the English language. Again, the correlational method does not merit the inference that there is any causal relationship between these variables; nevertheless it can be safely inferred that imbibing positive language-learning attitude can set an environment where a learner’s cultivation of the development of his / her sociolinguistic competence is not obstructed. It is indeed recommendable at this point that appropriate statistical analysis such as “predictor analysis” may be employed in some future research to prove the extent at which attitude can be a direct or indirect factor in the development of sociolinguistic competence.

Relative to the above findings, Gumperz (2011) said that one of the factors that determine the language behavior of a community is the attitudes to language choice. This denotes that social norms of language choice vary from different situations and from different communities such as social acceptance, public communication, private knowledge, and language loyalty.



**Fig. 5** Sociolinguistic Competence on the Motivation towards the English Language

### Motivation and Sociolinguistic Competence

Figure 5 isolates the data as to the results of the correlational statistics used to determine the status of relationship between motivation and sociolinguistic competence. With the previous confirmation of the significance in the relationship between these variables, it also implies that sociolinguistic competence is associated with learner characteristics since motivation is billeted under this profile-variable category.

This in fact already represents the second significant variable under such category so that this can further imply an apparently greater strength of correlation between learner characteristics and sociolinguistic competence more than the other profile-variable categories.

Accordingly, data shows that a significant fraction of the majority of the respondents with “Competent” status of sociolinguistic competence, are also the ones who display strong levels of motivation in learning the English language. This concurs with the parallel set of findings of Unciano (2010) in his study wherein high levels of motivation were also associated with students having relatively higher levels of English proficiency.

However, Unciano's instrument to assess the students' motivational orientation technically allows for determining the level of the students' motivation relative to the specific types of motivation as suggested by Deci & Ryan (1985 in Unciano 2010), which includes three sub-types of intrinsic motivation, three sub-types of extrinsic motivation, and amotivation.

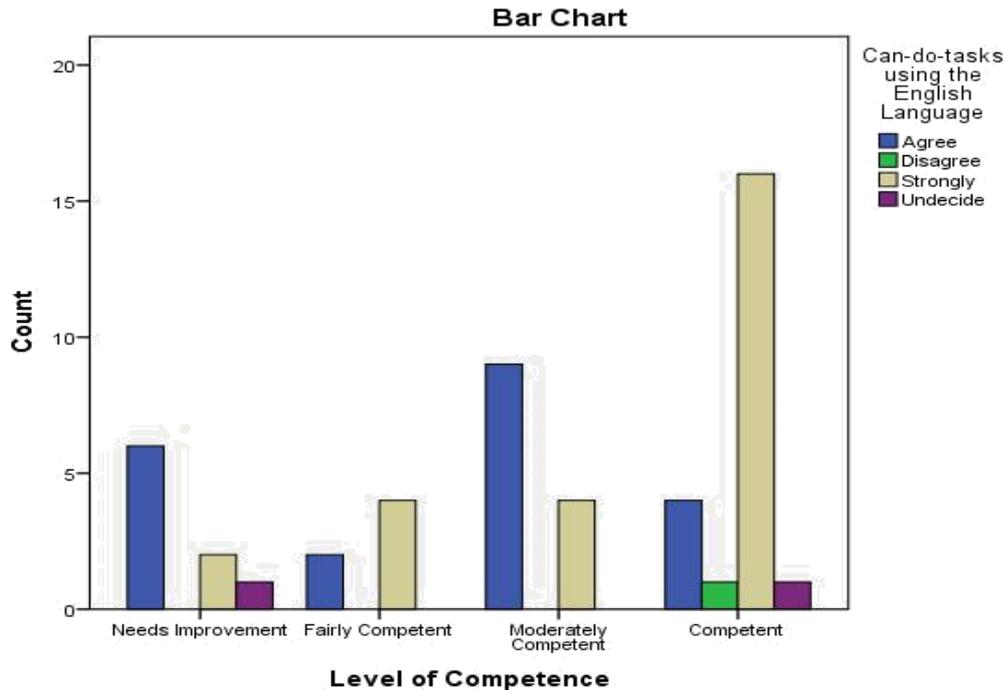
In the study of Unciano, significant correlation was found between levels of English proficiency and intrinsic motivation (in all its three sub-types). It was proven that the relationship is linear in nature wherein increase in levels of English proficiency implies a parallel increase in levels of intrinsic motivation. Even if this study adopted an alternative instrument aside from that used by Unciano, the data derived therein and the analysis of the results of correlation sort of reinforced the previously established findings of Unciano's research.

However, a slight deviation may be seen at where this study previously explained that the main characteristic of the respondents' high level of motivation seem to be symptomatic of "Instrumental Motivation" rather than "Integrative Motivation".

This may be a little bit contradicting the findings of Unciano in a way that the conceptual features of "Instrumental Motivation" seem to parallel with Deci & Ryan's "Extrinsic Motivation". If drawing from such premises, it appears that this study may be asserting that it is the high level of extrinsic motivation that is significantly associated with sociolinguistic competence.

On the other hand, this may not figure to be a contradiction if considering the fact that Unciano was looking for variables significantly associated with English proficiency and which presupposes proficiency in the linguistic level.

In contrast, this study deals more on finding which variables closely associate with sociolinguistic competence. It may be opined that sociolinguistic competence would distinctly require a higher degree of Extrinsic Motivation in language learning than an Intrinsic Motivation for a fact that the application of such competence is targeted towards extrinsic social elements.



**Fig. 6** Sociolinguistic Competence on the Can-Do Tasks using the English Language

### **Confidence on Can-Do Tasks and Sociolinguistic Competence**

Figure 6 likewise isolates the data as to the results of the correlation procedure to determine the status of relationship between the students' levels of confidence on can-do tasks and sociolinguistic competence. With the previous confirmation of the significance in the relationship between these variables, it also implies that sociolinguistic competence is associated with learner characteristics since confidence in can-do tasks is billeted under this profile-variable category.

This now makes full reinforcement of the previous claim that learner characteristics boasts of stronger correlation to sociolinguistic competence, especially that the present variable completes the total inventory of profile variables registered under such category. It is highly recommendable for future research to explore on the further confirmation of this finding and likewise explore on the breadth of its generalizability across other nationalities of respondents not covered by this study.

As reflected in the figure, majority of the respondents that are competent are also the ones who are confident on the can-do tasks prescribed in the learning of the English language.

Relative to this finding, the English Testing Service who administered a self-assessment inventory to TOEIC examinees in Japan and Korea in 2009 found that the everyday language tasks in English of the respondents has a significant relationship with their TOEIC speaking test scores ((Educational Testing Service [ETS], 2010).

As a way of providing further confirmation to such previous research findings, this study offers an additional information by also asserting that the close association of this variable is not merely applicable to speaking test scores but to sociolinguistic competence as well.

Another research finding from a different study, i.e. by Guo (2006) also corroborates with this study's finding wherein Guo investigated on the relationship between language proficiency level and use of communication strategies wherein the latter are linked to this study's context of can-do tasks.

In a way, skills relevant to the deployment of communicative strategies are invoked when performing can-do tasks and it appears that such skills are likewise closely associated to having relatively high levels of sociolinguistic competence.

## ***Summary***

### **1. Profile of Foreign National College Students**

In terms of socio-structural perspective, most of the respondents (24.0 percent) are Nigerian. Majority (52.0 percent) are 21-25 years old. There are more males (82.0 percent) than females (18.0 percent). Furthermore, the largest representation in terms of mother tongue is Arabic (34.0 percent).

Based on socio-cultural perspective, approximating almost half of the respondents (36.0 percent) have studied the English language within 0-5 years, while majority (60.0 percent) have only stayed in the Philippines 0-1 year. In addition, majority of the respondents (64.0 percent) are always exposed to the English language.

In terms of language learning characteristics, majority (54.0 percent) report to have a strong attitude towards learning the English language, and an even greater majority (78.0 percent) claim to be strongly motivated in learning English. Moreover, majority of them (70.0 percent) also incur confidence in accounting for "can do tasks" easily using the English language.

## **2. Sociolinguistic Competence of the Respondents**

The performance and scores of the respondents in the TOEIC Model Test of the respondents indicate majority of them (44.0 percent) obtaining above average score (mean: 14.7; standard deviation: 8.627). Moreover, the distribution is negatively skewed (-.601) and above the mean. Its kurtosis (-.956) indicates a platykurtic in which the test scores are tightly clustered above the mean.

Considering the 5-point competence scale used ranging from highly competent (highest scale) to needs improvement (lowest scale), approximating majority of the respondents (44.0 percent) registered to the range “competent” and above, while a marginal 12.0 percent fared as “fairly competent”.

## **3. Relationship between Sociolinguistic Competence of the Respondents and their Profile Variables**

The established variables fared differentially in the status of relationship with sociolinguistic competence, wherein those there were found significantly related are “native language, attitude, motivation, and can-do tasks” at a pre-established rate of .05 level of significance.

“Native language” which was found significantly related (0.017) points to the fact that the students identified to be socio-linguistically competent also speak Arabic, Igbo, and Tamil.

“Attitude” which was also found to be significantly related (0.014), also indicates those who are socio-linguistically competent also manifest a positive attitude towards learning the English language.

Another significantly related variable, i.e. “motivation” (0.042) shows that the respondents who are socio-linguistically competent likewise have a strong motivation towards learning the English language.

Furthermore, “can-do tasks” which was also found to be significantly related (0.020), indicates that majority of those who are socio-linguistically competent also exhibit confidence in performing can do tasks easily using the English language.

## **Conclusions**

From the aforementioned findings, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. The foreign national students have both differentiated and similar accounts as to their socio-structural and socio-cultural perspectives, with evidences that majority of them cluster more heavily on certain categories like nationality, age, sex, and native language (socio-structural) and number of years studied the English language (socio-cultural).

2. Majority of the foreign national students are socio-linguistically competent.

3. Foreign national students found to be sociolinguistically competence are mostly Arabic, have positive attitude in learning English, motivated to learn English, and perform can-do tasks easily.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are endorsed:

1. As to the profiles of the respondents, further research or surveys can explore on additional or alternative sets of variables to comprehensively characterize the traits of foreign national students in the context of finding cues as to which traits may be related to their aptitude in sociolinguistic competence and other areas of linguistic competence in English.

2. In view of the finding on the level of the students' sociolinguistic competence, it indicates a considerable gap from the ideal level as can be generally gleaned from their performance so that it should serve as a basis to fortify instructional intervention programs along this area of competence in the English language which foreign national students also need to cope with.

3. As to the data-gathering instrument used in this study, it is also recommended to use the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) Model Test for accurately gauging the sociolinguistic competence of students to draw results which may be treated as basis for instructional interventions and curriculum upgrading.

4. The findings as to those variables found to be significantly related to sociolinguistic competence should be noted as baseline information in the development of adequate instructional interventions aimed to enhance students' grasp of the concerned type of competence.

5. Continual research on the same theme adopted by these studies is highly recommendable, especially with inquiring into further and alternative variables that may be found to be significantly related to sociolinguistic competence in the context of optimizing the

baseline of information that describes the qualifications of such competence as would be useful for any training needs survey.

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